United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council terminates UNASOG mandate; commends Group's work and notes cooperation by Libya and Chad.

+ Secretary-General warns institutional instability, persistant tensions and unending confrontations in Africa have discouraged Western World; says some tempted to abandon continent to its own fate.

+ Secretary-General in Tunis for OAU summit, meets African Heads of State, ministers before returning to Geneva today.

+ WHO Director-General appeals to leaders at OAU summit to make personal commitment to AIDS control among young; calls for education and information programmes; says promotion of safe sex practices does not encourage promiscuity.

+ Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi holds talks with King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia; meets with former Prime-Minister and other politicians in the southern Yemen port of Mucala;

+ As World Hearings on Developmnent conclude, General Assembly President says discussions brought rich palette of ideas and new dimension to United Nations debate on what development means.

+ Armed men open fire in church in Kigali, take 180 people away; UNAMIR sponsors another round of cease-fire talks between RPF and Rwandan Government; UNICEF begins vaccinating refugees at football stadium.

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The Security Council today terminated the mandate of the United Nations Aouzou Strip Observer Group (UNASOG). In resolution 926 (1994) adopted unanimously today, the Council commended the work done by members of the Group. It also noted with appreciation the cooperation extended by Libya and Chad in accordance with the agreement both signed on 4 April. In a report to the Council earlier last week, the Secretary-General said UNASOG had successfully completed the task assigned to it.

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UNASOG was set up by Security Council resolution 915 (1994) to oversee Libya's withdrawal from the Aouzou Strip last month. The Strip which is situated on the border between Libya and Chad had been disputed by the two countries since 1973. In February, the International Court of Justice ruled that the Libyan presence should be withdrawn.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today warned that institutional instability, persistent tension and unending confrontations in Africa have given rise to a discouraging feeling in the Western World. Addressing the opening session of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in Tunis, the Secretary-General said there was a great temptation for some to abandon the continent to its own fate. Since the end of the cold war, developed countries had not shown the same interest in Africa and economic crises in the industrialized world had led to a withdrawal by traditional donors. More than ever, Africa, in the middle of its dramas, had reason for feeling alone.

Although half the United Nations peace-keeping operations were in Africa, nations there were also helping the Organization, the Secretary-General noted. There were 17 African countries participating in those operations and more than 8,500 soldiers or 12 percent of all peace-keeping forces on the continent were from Africa, he said. It was up to international organizations to galvanize opinions, provide the means and ensure the necessary assistance to compensate for weaknesses within the international community. The Secretary-General stressed that it was necessary, now more than ever, for the OAU and the United Nations to unite their efforts to maintain peace and promote economic development in Africa.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali arrived back in Geneva today, after addressing the Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in Tunis. Before leaving, the Secretary-General met with South African President Nelson Mandela and the Presidents of Guinea, Angola, Uganda and Nigeria.

Yesterday, the Secretary-General held talks with Esmat Abdel Meguid, the Secretary-General of the Arab League. They discussed Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi's mission to Yemen, and peace-keeping operations in Somalia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Secretary-General also met with the Presidents of the Congo, Zaire, Algeria, Senegal, the Central African Republic, and Cameroon. He held talks with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, the outgoing OAU President.

Over the weekend, the Secretary-General was received by the President of Tunisia, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Mr. Boutros-Ghali and OAU Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim reviewed issues before the Summit, particularly those concerning Rwanda, Burundi, Libera and Angola. Major problems confronting Africa which were being dealt with by the OAU and the United Nations were the focus of talks between the Secretary-General and the Prime Minister of Tunisia, Ahmed Karoui. The Secretary-General also met with the President of

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Djibouti and later visited the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Yasser Arafat. The two men reviewed the Cairo Accord and the Secreatry-General pledged full United Nations support to that process. He noted the Special Coordinator for the occupied territories, Terje Roed Larsen, would be establishing his headquarters in Gaza. Mr. Arafat underlined the importance of improving economic conditions in the territories and expressed his appreciation for United Nations assistance to the Palestinaian Provisional Authority.

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The Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, has appealed to African leaders to make a personal commitment to help prevent acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) among their young people. African Heads of State were meeting in Tunis today for the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit. Dr. Nakajima said education programmes must be as accurate as possible, and respect the values of individuals and families. The promotion of safe sexual behaviour did not encourage promiscuity but fostered respect for one's own body and life, and a better understanding of one's responsibilities towards other people, he stressed. Children must be prepared for adolescence and given the opportunity to go into adulthood without running the risk of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection.

Dr. Nakajima said authorities should ensure that the whole population had access to health services, care and treatment, as well as to condoms and counselling services. Social and economic protection should be given to children and families made destitute as a result of AIDS and national measures should be taken against discrimination. Social isolation and severe poverty reduced young people's ability to practise safe sexual behaviour, he said.

WHO estimates that in sub Saharan Africa almost two out of three infections occur among people under 25 years and are usually contracted through sex. In some places, the infection rate is five times higher among girls than among boys between the ages of 15 and 19, and in certain communities, up to 30 per cent of young adults are infected. In the near future, several million African children will be born with HIV or into families whose human and financial resources have been exhausted by HIV/AIDS.

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Special Envoy and Head of the fact-finding mission to Yemen Lakhdar Brahimi returned to that country on Saturday from Saudi Arabia where he held talks with the King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz and other officials. Yesterday, he met with former Prime-Minister Haider El-Atass and other politicians in the southern port of Mukala.

Meanwhile, Serge Telle from the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs headed a mission to the southern provinces of Abyan and Sahbwa to

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evaluate damage and losses there. He was accompanied by representatives from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

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Discussions at the World Hearings on Development had provided a rich palette of new ideas and proposals, General Assembly President S.R. Insanally said on Friday. Speaking at the conclusion on the five-day Hearings, he said they had set the stage for a more varied dialogue on what development could mean in a changing world. Bringing in new actors and unofficial views to discuss the Secretary-General's report on "An Agenda for Development" had brought a new dimension to United Nations debates, he added.

Hans Singer, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, United Kingdom, called for a global overview of structural adjustment programmes. Based on the philosophy of retrenchment first and non-inflationary growth later, those programmes led to distortions such as the oversaturation of commodity markets. Governments found it difficult to achieve growth once they had undergone retrenchment by using restrictive measures. Growth programmes must be adopted first, he said.

Charles William Maynes, Editor of the quarterly publication Foreign Policy, called for a more universal approach towards development. Although developing countries were suffering most, the growing problems of poverty and unemployment among the richest states were undermining all political will to attack the problems of world development.

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Armed men forced their way into a church complex in Kigali on Saturday, and opened fire on several hundred people who had taken refuge there, according to a United Nations spokesman. More than a dozen people were killed and 180 others taken away. United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) forces had been unable to reach the complex because of heavy fighting in the area.

In a related development, another round of cease-fire talks between representatives of the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) and the Rwandan Government was held today in Kigali under UNAMIR supervision. However, little progress has been reported so far, the spokesman said.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) began vaccination programmes for the thousands of refugees living in appalling sanitary conditions at the football stadium in Kigali. Although people in the stadium were too frightened to leave, UNAMIR resumed the exchange of displaced persons at a church and at King Faisal Hospital.

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